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The Canterbury Pilgrims

Percy MacKaye

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THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

AN OPERA

THE TEXT

BY

PERCY MACKAYE

THE MUSIC

BY

REGINALD DE KOVEN

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1916

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS work, which is an operatic version of my text "The Canterbury Pilgrims" (published in 1903), was put into its present form by me in the late spring and early summer of 1914. During the same summer Mr. Reginald de Koven began to compose his music for it at Vevey, Switzerland, where all of the music was composed by him and completed, together with the orchestration, in the autumn of the following year.

In the spring of 1916 the opera was accepted for production at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, where its first performance has been announced to take place during the season of 1916–17.

PERCY MACKAYE.

CORNISH, N. H.,
October, 1916.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MEN

GEOFFREY CHAUCER, First Poet Laureate of England.
KNIGHT.
SQUIRE, his Son.
FRIAR, MILLER, COOK, SHIPMAN, SUMMONER, PARDONER, } Alisoun's Swains.
HOST.
MAN OF LAW.
JOANNES, the Prioress' Servitor.
RICHARD II, King of England.

WOMEN

THE WIFE OF BATH (*Alisoun*).
THE PRIORESS (*Madame Eglantine*).
JOHANNA.

CHORUS

Pilgrims, Nobles, Choir-boys, Priests, Prelates, Nuns, Brooch-girls, Serving-maids, etc.

SCENES

ACT FIRST: The Tabard Inn, at Southwark, near London.
TIME: April 16, 1387. Late afternoon.

ACT SECOND: Garden of the One Nine-Pin Inn, at the little hamlet of Bob-up-and-down, en route to Canterbury.
TIME: April 19. The afternoon.

ACT THIRD: The hall of the One Nine-Pin Inn.
TIME: Evening of the same day.

ACT FOURTH: Before the west Front of Canterbury Cathedral.
TIME: The next day.

THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

AN OPERA

ACT FIRST

Scene: The Tabard Inn at Southwark, near London.

When the scene opens, PILGRIMS *are discovered thronging the court of the inn, seated at tables drinking, or standing by the ale-barrels flirting with the tap-maids.*

Among them are the MILLER, FRIAR, PARSON, PLOUGHMAN, FRANKLIN, DOCTOR, HABERDASHER, CARPENTER, WEAVER, DYER, TAPICER, *and* CLERK. *The* KNIGHT, SQUIRE, YEOMAN, *and others enter soon after, as from horseback.*

At rise of the curtain, the MILLER *is raising his tankard, and leading the others in chorus.*

CHO. Oh, good ale under the gable
When the year is young and green,
And a tankard over the table —
Is mirth for king and queen!
Then it's whoa! whoa!
Stirrup go jingle, spur go clink:
Whoa! whoa!
Come in, lads! Come drink!
Tap-maid, here! Come tipple your man
With a kiss on the curve of his can, can, can!

[*Enter* CHAUCER, *reading in a great volume.*]

MIL. Ho, here's our vintner, ogling on a book!

CHAU. [*Looks up, smiling.*] A book's a mistress all the world may love
And none be jilted.

FRIAR. [*Poking his nose in the book.*] What's the psalm you read?

CHAU. [*Pointing at the page.*] To live a king with kings, a clod with clods,
To be at heart a bird of every feather,
A fellow of the finch as well as the lark,
The equal of each, brother of every man —
[*He claps the cover shut, and laughs at the* FRIAR.]
That is my psalm and rosary, sweet Friar!

MIL. [*Gruntingly.*] Is *that* thy song?

CHAU. [*Lifting a tankard.*] Good ale, and pilgrimage!
[*He sings, as the others join in the chorus.*]

Ah, God-speed under the rafter
Where the road leads forth to Spring,
With a lass to quicken the laughter —
Is royal wayfaring!

CHO. Then it's whoa! whoa!
Sorrow go whistle, care go wink:
Whoa! whoa!
Come in, lads! Come drink!
Here, tap-lassie! Wheedle your man
With a kiss on the curve of his can, can, can!

[*At the conclusion of the chorus, the* PILGRIMS *break into groups, converse laughingly, and drink. The* KNIGHT, *with the* SQUIRE, *approaches* CHAUCER, *and greets him courteously.*]

KNIGHT. I am returning from the Holy Land
And go to pay my vows at Canterbury.
This is my son.

CHAU. Go you to Canterbury
As well, Sir Squire?

[*The* SQUIRE, *turning away with a long-drawn sigh, fingers a flute in his hand.*]

SQUIRE. Ah, me!

KNIGHT. [*With a knowing look at* CHAUCER.] He is in love!

[*As the* SQUIRE *plays a few lovelorn notes on his flute,* CHAUCER *follows with a twinkling glance and addresses him with an air of courtly melancholy.*]

CHAU. My dearest heart and best beloved foe,
Why liketh you to do me all this woe?
What have I done that grieveth you, or said,
Save that I love and serve you, high and low?

SQUIRE. [*Staring in astonishment.*] Your pardon, sir; those verses are not yours.
Chaucer — our poet laureate — he wrote them.

[*He turns away again, but continues to watch* CHAUCER *with curious intentness.*]

MIL. [*To the* HOST.] Ten gallon ale! God's arms! I take thee.

FRIAR. What's
The wager?

HOST. Yonder door; this Miller here

Shall break it, at a running, with his head.
The door is oak. The stakes ten gallon ale.

THE VOICES OF NUNS. [*Outside.*] Laudate, pueri, Dominum! Laudate nomen Domini!

HOST. [*Turning toward the outer door.*] Who's coming now?

FRIAR. [*Peering forth interestedly.*] Grand folk: a Prioress!

[*The* HOST *bows low to greet the* PRIORESS, *who appears at the door accompanied by a bevy of Nuns and by* JOANNES, *a priest, who carries a little pup in his arms.*]

HOST. Welcome, my lady dear! Vouchsafe to enter
Poor Herry Bailey's Tabard Inn.

PRI. [*Ignoring him, speaks to the* PRIEST.] Where is my little hound?

JOAN. 'Tis here, my lady.

PRI. Pray carry him before, and carefully.

[JOANNES *goes toward the door, left, which the* MILLER *is preparing to ram with his head.*]

FRIAR. The door is locked.

JOAN. But, sir, the Prioress —

MIL. Heigh! Clear the way!

[*With clenched fists, and head doubled over, the* MILLER *runs for the door. The* PILGRIMS *watch and shout.*]

PILGRIMS. Harroo! Run, Robin! Ho!

[*With a crash, the* MILLER'S *head strikes the door and splits it. At the shock, he rebounds against* JOANNES *and, reaching to save himself from falling, seizes the puppy.*]

MIL. A twenty devils damn him!

FRIAR. Soft! What ails thee?
MIL. The priest hath bit my hand.
JOAN. Sweet sir, the puppy —
It was the puppy, sir!
MIL. Wring me its neck!
PRI. Help-o! Alas! St. Loy! Will no one help?
CHAU. Madame, what may I do?
PRI. My little hound —
The churl — My little hound — The churl will hurt it.
If you would fetch to me my little hound —
CHAU. Madame, I'd fetch you Cerberus from Hell.
MIL. Lo, masters! See a dog's neck wrung!
CHAU. [*Breaking through the crowd, seizes the* MILLER *by the throat.*] Which dog's?
MIL. Leave go!—'Sblood! Take the whelp, a devil's name!
CHAU. Kneel! Ask grace of this lady here.
MIL. [*Sullenly.*] What lady?
CHAU. Of her whom gentles call St. Charity
In every place and time. —
MIL. [*Kneels, morosely.*] Lady, I axe your pardon.
CHAU. Madame, your little hound is safe.
PRI. [*Nestles the little hound with tender effusiveness; then turns shyly to* CHAUCER.] Merci!
My name is Madame Eglantine. [*She hurries out, left.*]
CHAU. [*To himself.*] Hold, Geoffrey!
Why beats thy heart to help a little hound? —
Ah, Madame Eglantine, unless ye be
To me, as well as him, St. Charity!
SQUIRE. Father! My lord!

KNIGHT. Well, son?

SQUIRE. [*Looking at* CHAUCER.] Sir, saw you eve
So knightly, sweet and sovereign a man?
Sir, have you guessed who 'tis?

KNIGHT. To judge him by his speech –
Some valiant officer.

SQUIRE. Nay, *I* have guessed!

[*Outside is heard the distant voice of the Wife of Bath*
—ALISOUN—*joined in chorus by the* PARDONER,
SHIPMAN, *and* SUMMONER.]

ALIS.
When folk o' Faerie
Are laughing in the laund,
And the nix pipes low in the miller's pond,
Come hither, love, to me!

CHO. With doe and with dove,
Come back to your love;
Come hither, love, to me!

HOST. [*At the door, to* FRIAR.] Hist! Who's yon jolly Nancy riding here,
With them three tapsters tooting up behind?

FRIAR. [*Staring.*] By sweet St. Cuthbert!

HOST. Ha! Ye ken the wench.

FRIAR. The wench? Oho! List, sir: Thy wench hath been
A five times wedded and five hundred wooed;
Hath rode alone to sweet Jerusalem
And back more oft than Dick-the-Lion's-Heart.
She was not born a-yesterday; yet, by

The merry mass, when she comes in the door,
She maketh sweet-sixteen as stale as dough.

HOST. She looks a jolly Malkin. What's her name?

FRIAR. Dame Alisoun, a cloth-maker of Bath.

[*Outside the song "Come hither, love," bursts into chorus.*

Enter ALISOUN, *the Wife of Bath, astride a small white ass, which is fancifully caparisoned like a fairy creature. Spurs jingle on the Wife's boots, and on her head is a great round hat. Followed by the* SUMMONER, PARDONER, *and* SHIPMAN, *she rides into the middle of the floor and reins up.*]

ALIS. Whoa-oop! — God save this merry company!

[*A commotion.*]

By God, I ween ye ken not what I am:
I am the jolly Elf-Queen, and this is
My milk-white doe, whereon I ride as light
As Robin Good-Boy on a bumble-bee.
[*Indicating the ass's ears.*] These be his wings. — And lo my retinue!
These here be choir-boys from Fairyland!
Come, Pardoner, toot up my praise anon.

PARD. & ALIS. [*Together.*]

When sap runs in the tree,
And the huntsman sings "Halloo!"
And the greenwood saith: "Peewit! Cuckoo!"
Come hither, love, to me!
With turtle and plover,
Come back to your lover;
Come hither, love, to me!

ALIS. Now, lads, the chorus!

[*The* SWAINS *and* ALISOUN, *joined by other* PILGRIMS, *repeat the refrain in chorus.*

Re-enter CHAUCER *and* JOANNES. CHAUCER *carries in his hand a crock.*

The MILLER *and others of the* SWAINS *offer* ALISOUN *their tankards of ale; but, spying* CHAUCER, ALISOUN *waves them back.*]

ALIS. Nay, Robin, Huberd, back! Ye are too late,
All o' ye! The Elf-Queen spies her Oberon!
[*Wheeling the ass to confront* CHAUCER.]
By God, sir, you're the figure of a man
For me! — Give me thy name.

CHAU. [*Momentarily taken aback.*] My name, your Majesty?

ALIS. Make it a swap, man. Mine is Alisoun,
And lads they ken me as the Wife of Bath.

CHAU. My name is Geoffrey. When the moon is full,
I am an elf, and skip upon the green.

SQUIRE. [*To the* KNIGHT.] Father, 'tis he: the poet laureate!

SHIP. [*Offering his tankard.*] Take this, old girl!

ALIS. The devil take a tar!
[*Snatches the crock from* CHAUCER'S *hand.*]
I'll take a swig from Geoffrey's. Holy Virgin!
What pap is this here? Milk and wastel-bread?

CHAU. Nay, 'tis a kind of brew concocted from
The Milky Way, to nurse unmarried maids.

ALIS. [*Hands it back quickly.*] Saints! None o' that for me!

CHAU. [*Giving it to* JOANNES.] Bear it to your mistress.

ALIS. [*Winking at the* SWAINS.] Mistress! — Aha! A woman in the case!
[*To* CHAUCER.] Give us your hand, Sir Elf of the Full-Moon,
And help me light adown. — What! Are ye afeard
To take me in your arms?

CHAU. Fair Alisoun,
Thou art a vision of the ruddy Venus
Bright pommeled on the unspotted Pegasus,
And I am Ganymede, thy stable-boy!
[*He helps her to alight.*]

ALIS. Well swung! What think ye of my jolly heft?

CHAU. Thou art a very dandelion seed
And I thy zephyr.

MIL. [*To the* SWAINS.] 'Sblood! He steals our wench.

SQUIRE. [*Approaching* CHAUCER *diffidently, speaks low.*] Great Master Chaucer!

CHAU. Hush! Speak not my name.
I travel here incognito.
[*He takes the* SQUIRE *aside.*]

ALIS. Halloa! What's struck this jolly company?
Ye're flat as stale ale. Master Summoner, what's
The matter now?

SUM. Was it for this I sang "Come hither, love"?

MIL. Aye, was it for this? — A milksop of a man!

ALIS. Geoffrey, ye mean? Ho! Are ye jealous there?
Hark, lads: Myself have made a vow 'twixt here
And Holy Thomas' shrine to twig a husband;
But if I like this fellow Geoffrey, can't

I like ye all? By God, give me your fists;
Here's pot-luck to ye all, lads. Fetch some ale!

[*As they scramble to get ale,* ALISOUN *turns to* CHAUCER, *who is examining some holy relics shown him by the* PARDONER. *She slaps* CHAUCER *on the shoulder.*]

ALIS. Now, Geoffrey, lad! Which will ye liever kiss:
A dead saint's bones, or a live lass — her lips?

[*Re-enter the* PRIORESS.]

CHAU. Why, Alisoun, I say all flesh is grave clothes,
And lips the flowers that blossom o'er our bones;
God planted 'em to bloom in laughter's sunshine
And April kissing-showers.

[*Laughing, he kisses* ALISOUN *and suddenly sees the* PRIORESS.] St. Charity!

ALIS. Haha! That time I had thee on the rump.

[*Laughing, she joins the* SWAINS, *where the* FRIAR *talks to her.*]

PRIORESS. [*To* CHAUCER, *shocked.*] And you a gentilhomme
— at least I thought so
Whenas you saved my little hound. — Ah, sir!

CHAU. [*Penitently.*] I will absolve me at St. Thomas' shrine.

PRI. [*Eagerly.*] Go you to Canterbury?

CHAU. With the rest.

PRI. Oh, I am glad. — You see,

[*At a sign from* ALISOUN, *the* FRIAR *listens behind them, unobserved.*]

I go to meet my brother on the road;
He is returning from the Holy Land;

I am to meet him at the One Nine-Pin,
A tavern at Bob-up-and-down. But —

CHAU. But?

PRI. I have not seen him since I was a child.
I have forgotten how he looks.

CHAU. [*Glancing toward the* KNIGHT.] He is
Returning from the Holy Land?

PRI. And has
His son with him, for squire. He is a knight.

CHAU. [*Looking harder at the* KNIGHT *and* SQUIRE.] A son — his squire! Good Lord!

PRI. And so, Monsieur,
I am boldened by your courtesy to ask
Your help to find him at Bob-up-and-down;
Till when — your kind protection on the road.

CHAU. Madame, I am honored,
But how am I to recognize your brother?

PRI. He wears a ring, on which is charactered
The letter "A," and after, writ in Latin,
The same inscription as is fashioned here
Upon my brooch. I may not take it off,
For I did promise him to wear it always.
But look, sir, here's the motto. Can you read it?
[*She extends her hand, from the bracelet of which dangles a brooch. The* FRIAR *draws nearer.*]

CHAU. I thank you. [*Reads.*] "Amor vincit omnia."
[*Looking at her.*] "Love conquers all."

PRI. [*With shy embarrassment.*]
C'est juste, Monsieur. Adieu!
[*She goes out hastily.*]

FRIAR. [*Making off to* ALISOUN.] Hist! "Amor vincit omnia." — Sweet Alis!

[*After talking aside with* ALISOUN, *he goes to the* KNIGHT.]

CHAU. [*To himself — looking at the* KNIGHT *and* SQUIRE.]

A morning's canter to Bob-up-and-down!
"Till when, — my kind protection on the road."
She has not recognized this Knight and Squire.
When last they met she was a little child. —
A morning's canter: April is the time —
Place, Merry England! Why not Lord Protector
Geoffrey? Her brother — why should *he* protect her?
Nay, that will I, for "Amor vincit omnia!"

[*He turns to get his book.*]

FRIAR. [*To the* KNIGHT, *whose finger-ring he examines.*]

Your ring — how quaint, my lord!
A crownèd "A" and underneath a motto.

KNIGHT. [*Stiffly.*] Quite so.

FRIAR. Merci! [*He returns quickly to* ALISOUN.]

ALIS. Her brother — the One Nine-Pin?

FRIAR. Him yonder!

ALIS. Good.

FRIAR. Sweet Alisoun, my pay?

ALIS. Hoot, holy brother Huberd! Love's reward
Is service.
[*Aside, eyeing* CHAUCER.] Corpus Venus! What a figure!
I'll woo him. Aye; but first to rid me of
These other fellows.

[*Beckoning the* FRIAR *and the other* SWAINS, *she whispers to them and they go out.*

She then comes over to CHAUCER, *who sits reading.*]

Ho, candle! Come out from under thy bushel.

CHAU. [*Peering over the edge of his book.*] Nay,
'Tis a dark world to shine in. I will read.

ALIS. What is't about?

CHAU. The wickedness of woman.
[*Reads aloud, imperturbably.*]
"A lovely woman, chaste, is like a rose;
Unchaste, a ring of gold in a sow's nose."

ALIS. Lo, what a pretty preaching pardoner!
Lo, here's bright Alisoun, the Queen o' May,
Blooms like a lily waiting to be plucked,
Yet here thou blinkest on a dusty page!

CHAU. "Better it is to dwell high on the roof
Than down i' the house where woman wields reproof."
O, what a list of ladies! What a world!
Hark, Alisoun! and after thou hast heard,
Repent, and cease to be a woman. Hark!
"Who first obeyed the snake's advice, to thieve
The apple from God's Eden? — Mother Eve."

ALIS. [*Tearing a page out of the book, boxes* CHAUCER *on the cheek.*] A devil fetch thy drasty book!

CHAU. Hold, hold!
Dame Alis! gentle Alisoun! [*He recovers the torn page.*]

ALIS. You men! God's arms! What ken ye of true women?
You stuff a doll and name it Modesty.
By corpus bones! Is not a mare a horse?

But no! Ye sanctify a squeamish mule;
And when an honest wench that speaks her mind,
Meets a fine lad, and says out plat: "I love thee —"
She is a sinner, and your doll a saint.

CHAU. Alis, you speak like one in jealousy.

ALIS. Why, Geoffrey, so I am. To tell thee flat,
I'm jealous of thy Lady Prioress.

CHAU. Peace, dame. Speak not her name with mine.

ALIS. Aye, go it:
Miss Innocence and Master Modesty!
How's that?

CHAU. [*With tone of command.*] Dame Alisoun, it is enough.

ALIS. Why, then, it is enough. Come, lad; clap hands.
I am a bud of old experience
Whom frost ne'er yet hath nipped. Therefore, sweet Geoffrey,
This Prioress wears a brooch upon her wrist.

CHAU. Well, what of that?

ALIS. Yea, "What of that?" Good soul!
She stops this journey at Bob-up-and-down.

CHAU. How knowest thou?

ALIS. Nay, t'other ear is wise.
At the One Nine-Pin she shall meet —

CHAU. Her brother.

ALIS. What wilt thou bet she goeth not to meet
Her sweetheart — aye, her lover?

CHAU. Thou art daft.

ALIS. Wilt *bet* me?

CHAU. Bet away!

ALIS. Ho, then, it is a bet, and this the stakes:
If that my Lady Prioress shall give
Yon brooch of gold from off her pretty wrist
Unto the man whom she goes now to meet,
And that same man prove not to be her brother —
Then thou shalt marry me at Canterbury.

CHAU. A twenty of thee, dame. But if thou lose
The stakes, then thou shalt kneel adown and kiss
Yon brooch of gold upon her pretty wrist,
And pray the saints to heal thy jealousy.

ALIS. Aye, man, it is a bet; and here's my fist.

CHAU. And here's mine, Alis; thou art a good fellow.

ALIS. Mind; if I win, right there we'll be betrothed,
And thou must marry me by England's law.

CHAU. [*Laughing.*] I'll take my chance.

THE SWAINS. [*Entering, in uproar.*] Come hither, love, to me!

ALIS. Here come my choir-boys. [*Beckoning the* SWAINS.]
Come here, sweethearts! Hark! I have made a bet
With goodman Geoffrey yonder. Him as helps
Me best to win my bet, by God! he shall
Make merry for my marriage. Come, which fellow
Will help me?

ALL. I!

ALIS. The best shall make me bride.

[*A horn is blown.* PILGRIMS *come in, dressed for riding.* CHAUCER *hails them.*]

CHAU. Lordings, who goes to Canterbury?

ALL. I!

CHAU. Ho, horses there! To Canterbury!

ALL. To Canterbury!

CHAU. [*Approaching the* PRIORESS, *offers his arm.*] Madame, will you vouchsafe to me the honor?

PRI. [*With stately courtesy.*] Merci!

ALIS. [*Mocking the* PRIORESS, *takes* CHAUCER'S *other arm.*] Merci!

[*With humorous pantomime,* CHAUCER *escorts them both toward the door, as all present, preparing to depart, join in the chorus of Pilgrims.*]

CHO. Saint Thomas he is a goodly soul;
He heals the world and makes it whole;
He gladdens hearts of every age
And hales them forth on pilgrimage,
Where little larks, as they fly up
To share his holy-water cup,
In Thomas' name this carol sing:
Alleluyah!
Love is lord of Spring!

Saint Thomas' voice is a holy bell;
It sounds where all sad people dwell;
And all who hear lay down their load
To ride on Canterbury road,
Where mavis, ouzel, thrush and wren
Mingle their songs in the throats of men
To raise this hymn to his hallowing:
Alleluyah!
Love is lord of Spring!

Saint Thomas' good and merry voice
The ploughmen hear it and rejoice,
The yeomen harken on the hills
Where April leads the daffodils,
  Till lover, leper, knight and thrall
  Ride forth together, one and all,
To chant aloud this holy thing:
    Alleluyah!
  Love is lord of Spring!

ACT SECOND

Scene: Garden of the One Nine-Pin inn, at the little hamlet of Bob-up-and-down, en route to Canterbury.

Enter CHAUCER *and the* SQUIRE.

CHAU. Boy, what a ride! Was ever such a ride
As ours from London? — Hillsides newly greened,
Brooks splashing silver in the small sweet grass,
Pelt gusts of rain dark'ning the hills, and then
Wide swallowed up in sunshine! Hark, O hark!
[*A cuckoo sounds; they listen.*]
The meadow is the cuckoo's clock, and strikes
The every hour at every minute; larks run up
And ring its golden chimes against the sun.
SQUIRE. Sir, only lovers count the time in heaven.
Are you in love?
CHAU. Ah, over head and heart.
SQUIRE. And is your lady kind?
CHAU. As angels are;
For she is distant as the evening star —
And though I love her, she may never know
Nor I reveal my love.
SQUIRE. Have you no hope?
Would I might help you, for I am myself
Unhappy in my love.

CHAU. Nay, then, let me
Help *you*. What's wrong?
SQUIRE. Alas, my lady's name!
I cannot tell my love euphoniously.
CHAU. How so?
SQUIRE. Her name is not poetical.
Johanna! Who can sonnetize Johanna!
CHAU. Invent a name to please you.
SQUIRE. Euphranasia —
I've thought of Euphranasia.
FRIAR. [*Pops his head from behind the wall.*] Qui est là?
[*Dodges down again.*]
SQUIRE. How like you Helena?
PRI. [*Sings within.*] A solis ortu usque ad occasum, laudabile nomen Domini!
SQUIRE. Euridice?
CHAU. [*Listening to the* PRIORESS'S *voice, lifts a spray of honeysuckle on the wall.*] No, no! This spray shall name her. [*The* FRIAR *peeps over the wall again.*]
SQUIRE. Eglantine!
Music itself! But, sir, I have an aunt named Eglantine.
My father journeys here to meet her now.
What matter? — Eglantine!
CHAU. Now Eglantine shall be your love's new name
And I will write her verses for you.
SQUIRE. [*Joyfully.*] *You!*
Oh, you are kind to serve me so.
CHAU. Nay, lad;
For, serving so, I solace my own heart.
Now leave me, for my heart is fain to sing

Verses to Eglantine. Come back for them
At chapel bell.

SQUIRE. [*Hastening off.*] I will, and thank you, sir!
And, sir, my lady's home's in Italy.
Pray, in your verses, mention Italy.

[CHAUCER *waves to him as he departs, then stands musing.*]

CHAU. Italy! — Eglantine!

[*Entering the arbour, he begins to write.*]

Eglantine,
O to be
There with thee
In olive-silvered Italy!

[*Enter, right, the* PRIORESS, *carrying her little hound.* CHAUCER *sees her, and starts, exclaiming low:*]

Eglantine!

PRI. [*To her little hound.*] Jacquette, ma petite, it is a pretty day.
See you those clouds? They are St. Agnes' sheep;
She hath washed their wool all white and turned 'em loose
To play on Heaven's warm hillside. Smell that rose?

CHAU. Gods! Must I hand her over — to a brother!

PRI. [*Plucking the rose's petals till the last petal falls.*] Pater noster [our Father], qui es in coelis [which art in heaven], sanctificetur nomen tuum [hallowed be Thy name]. Adveniat regnum tuum [Thy kingdom come]; fiat voluntas tua [Thy will be done]!

CHAU. Amen! I must resign!

[*He is about to step from the arbor and discover himself, but pauses as a shout of the* PILGRIMS *comes from within.*]

PILGRIMS. The Wife of Bath
She's a good fellow,
A maiden mellow
Of aftermath.

PRI. [*Startled.*] Vite, vite, ma petite!

[*She hastens to the arbour, where* CHAUCER *quickly pretends to be absorbed in writing. As she is withdrawing hastily, however, he turns round.*]

Monsieur, excusez moi!

CHAU. Madame, the fault is mine; I crave your pardon.

PRI. What fault, Monsieur?

CHAU. [*Breaks a spray from the arbour and hands it to her.*] I trespass in *your* bower.
Permettez.

PRI. Honeysuckle?

CHAU. So 'tis called;
But poets, lady, name it — eglantine.

PRI. M'sieur!

CHAU. May I remain and call it so?

PRI. [*Hearing the approach of the* PILGRIMS, *looks timorously to him for protection.*] M'sieur, this is Jacquette, my little hound.

[CHAUCER *takes the pup; they retire farther into the arbour, as the Wife of Bath enters from the inn. She is accompanied by her Swains, the* FRIAR, MILLER, COOK, SUMMONER, PARDONER, *and* SHIPMAN, *who enter singing. They lift her upon the table, and form a circle around her.*]

PILGRIMS. The Wife of Bath
She's a good fellow,
A maiden mellow
Of aftermath.

She cuts a swath
Through sere-and-yellow;
No weeping willow
Bestrews her path.

Her voice in wrath
Is a bullock's bellow;
For every good fellow
Eyes she hath.

She's a good fellow
The Wife of Bath!

ALIS. Let's have an elf dance. Come!
[*To the* SUMMONER.] Thy arm, sweet Puck!
[*The* MILLER, *sitting on the wall, plays his pipe, while* ALISOUN *dances with her* SWAINS, *each of whom is jealous of the rest.* CHAUCER *and the* PRIORESS *still remain out of sight in the arbour. As the music grows merrier, the* PRIORESS *begins to click the beads of her rosary rhythmically.*]

CHAU. Why do you tell your beads, Madame?
PRI. To keep
The fairies from my feet.
CHAU. The fairies?
PRI. Yes,
The pipe has set them free. I feel them twitch me.

CHAU. Why drive them away?

PRI. Monsieur!

CHAU. See you the birds?
St. Francis taught that we should learn of them.

PRI. What do they?

CHAU. Sing, and dance from bough to bough.
The Muses sang; and St. Cecilia danced.

PRI. Think you she danced, sir, of her own sweet will?

CHAU. Nay, not in April! In April, 'tis God's will.

PRI. Monsieur — [*Gives her hand shyly to* CHAUCER.] 'tis April.

[*They dance, in stately fashion, within the arbour. Forgetting themselves in the dance, however, they come a little too far forward;* ALISOUN *spies them, and, clapping her hands, the music stops.*]

ALIS. Caught! Ho, turtle-doves!
Come forth, Sir Elvish Knight, Sir Oberon!
Fetch forth thy veilèd nymph, that trips so fair.

[CHAUCER *steps forth from the arbour. The* PRIORESS *seizes her little hound from the settle and hides her face.*]

ALL. [*With laughter.*] Hail!

CHAU. Silence, loons! And thou, wife, hold thy tongue
And know thy betters.

ALIS. Betters! — Ho! mind our bet!
When I have won, thou shalt eat humble pie.

CHAU. Be gone! And mind you, when you mock this lady,
That all the saints, to whom you bumpkins pray,
Dance with the Virgin round the throne of God.

[*Some of the* PILGRIMS *retire; others remain staring and bow as* CHAUCER *and the* PRIORESS *cross to the inn door, and go within.* ALISOUN *is left alone, biting her fingers in rage. The* FRIAR *enters, approaches, and sings with merry mockery.*]

FRIAR. Ye lasses jilted, lovers droopèd,
Rose-lip —

ALIS. Shut up!

FRIAR. Rose-lip, white-brow, blue-eye, brown-tress,
Confide your pretty hearts! Confess
To the pleasant Friar; trust not Cupid. —

ALIS. [*To herself.*] By Peter!
I have the plan!

FRIAR. [*Sings on.*] Love is a liar!
But lovers love the pleasant Friar,
Who, making of their burdens less —

[*Here he approaches* ALISOUN *caressingly, and deftly steals a gold pin from her head-dress.*]

ALIS. [*Laughing to herself.*] Ha! that shall win my bet!
What, Huberd! Harkee!

FRIAR. [*Secreting the pin.*]
Ben'cite!
(Thus singeth he.)
Bene-benedicite!

ALIS. Wilt thou hear my plan?
List now! Ye wot I made a bet last night
With Geoffrey. This was it: Dame Eglantine,
Here at this inn expects to meet her brother.

FRIAR. You mean — Dan Roderigo.

ALIS. Aye; but as
She hath not seen him since she was a child,
She hath not recognized him. He, ye ken,
Doth wear a ring wi' a Latin posy in't.
FRIAR. I know; 'tis "Amor vincit omnia,"
The same as on her brooch.
ALIS. There hangs my bet.
For if Dame Eglantine shall give yon brooch
Into the hands of any but her brother,
Then Geoffrey marries me at Canterbury.
FRIAR. Diable! *Marries* thee?
ALIS. Aye, marries me!
A husband is my holy pilgrimage,
And Geoffrey is my shrine!
FRIAR. Et moi?
ALIS. Et toi?
Thou helps me catch my bird.
[*Enter the* MILLER *by the wicket gate.*]
FRIAR. Et donc?
ALIS. "Et donc?"
Why, then, I'll give a farthing to the Friars.
FRIAR. Nay, dame, the coin of Cupid is a kiss.
One kiss pour moi — at Canterbury — un baiser!
MIL. [*Seizing the* FRIAR.] One pasty, eh? thou shorn ape!
FRIAR. [*Screams.*] Alisoun!
ALIS. [*Suddenly embracing the* MILLER, *whispers to him.*]
Whist, Robin, lad. I have a plan. Run fast;
Fetch here the other lads, and bring a gag.
MIL. A gag? For him?
ALIS. Run quick.

MIL. [*Going.*] By Corpus arms!

FRIAR. [*Tauntingly.*]

Mealy Miller, moth-miller,
Fly away!
If dame Butterfly doth say thee nay,
Go and court a caterpillar!

MIL. [*Laughing, shakes his fist.*] Ha, ha! By Corpus bones! [*Exit at gate.*]

ALIS. Now, bird, the plot!
I've sent him for a gag.

FRIAR. A gag? What for?

ALIS. To win my bet, of course. 'Tis for this Knight,
The Prioress' brother, — him that wears the ring
With *Amor Vincit Omnia.*

FRIAR. Ho, ho!

ALIS. I bet with Geoffrey 'him who wears the ring
Will be Milady's lover.' So, sweet bird,
I will enact the lover and the Knight
And woo Dame Eglantine.

FRIAR. Thou! Play the Knight?

ALIS. [*Jingling her spurs.*] Who else? I've won my spurs.
Hark! then: Bob Miller
With you and t'other lads shall gag this Knight
And tie him fast in yonder cellar. There
We'll steal his ring and clothes.
[*Snatching from the* FRIAR'S *hood a beard.*]
And I will borrow
This false beard from thy tippet.
[*She puts it on, laughing.*]

FRIAR. Ho, thou wit
Of Aristotle!

[*Re-enter, left,* CHAUCER, *in meditation.* ALISOUN *gives a gesture of silence.*]

ALIS. Whist, now! Come away!

CHAU. [*Reads from his parchment.*]

Eglantine,
O to be
There with thee
Over sea
In olive-silvered Italy!

[*A bell sounds outside;* CHAUCER *pauses, and draws out a pocket sun-dial.*]

The chapel bell! My signorino soon
Will claim his verses! [*Reads on to himself, writing.*]

ALIS. [*Aside to* FRIAR.] Eglantine! What's this?

FRIAR. Love verses. He hath writ them for the Squire
To give unto his lady-love Johanna,
Who comes from Italy.

ALIS. But he said "Eglantine."

FRIAR. Aye, dame; he calls
Her Eglantine to be poetical.

ALIS. Love verses, sayst thou! Filch them, bird, and let
Milady Prioress read them!

FRIAR. Ho, well planned!
A merry plot! Hide, then, and watch me now.

[ALISOUN *hides by the wicket gate. The* FRIAR *obsequiously approaches* CHAUCER, *who reads on, to himself.*]

CHAU. — In olive-silvered Italy!
There to pray
At thy shrine —
There to lay
This green spray —

FRIAR. Sir, benedicite!

CHAU. The same to you!

FRIAR. The gentle Squire sent me for his verses.

CHAU. They are just finished. Give him these.
[*Handing the parchment and a green sprig to the* FRIAR.]
This spray
Of eglantine goes with them.

FRIAR. [*Bowing.*] Save you, sir!
[*The* FRIAR *returns to* ALISOUN. CHAUCER, *absent-minded, passes on to the inn door, musing aloud.*]

CHAU. April, May,
Cannot stay:
We be pilgrims — so are they!
And our shrine
Far away
Is the heart of Eglantine. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter from the inn, the* KNIGHT; *from the wicket gate, the* SWAINS, *with rope and a gag.*]

ALIS. [*To the* FRIAR.] Quick; here's our Knight. Go find the Prioress,
And when you've given her the verses, join
Me and the other fellows in the cellar.
[*Jerking her thumb at the* KNIGHT.]
He'll be with us.

FRIAR. Thy valet comprehends.

KNIGHT. [*To the* FRIAR.] Good fellow, have you seen my son, the Squire?

FRIAR. My lord, that dame can tell you.
[*Throwing a kiss to* ALISOUN.] Au revoir!
[*Then, throwing another to the* MILLER, *he sings as he skips out.*]
Ma douce gazelle,
Ma gazelle belle,
Bon soir!

KNIGHT. This woman tell me of my son! 'Tis strange.

ALIS. [*Aside to the* MILLER.] Ye ken!

MIL. Aye, aye.
[*Looking pleased, he speaks to the others aside. During the following scene, all of them approach the* KNIGHT *cautiously with ropes and a gag, while* ALISOUN, *distracting the* KNIGHT, *warns or urges them in pantomime.*]

KNIGHT. Good woman, have you seen —

ALIS. And do mine eyes behold him once again?
O sir! The blissful saints requite you, sir!

KNIGHT. For what, good dame?

ALIS. His voice! That I should hear
His voice once more! The vision bursts again
Upon my brain: the swords, the sweated horse,
The lifted battle-mace, and then his arms,
His arms around me — saved! [*Falling at his feet.*]
Oh, can it be?

KNIGHT. Off me, thou wife of Satan!

ALIS. Heard ye that?

Lads, to the rescue!

KNIGHT. Sorcery!

[*The* MILLER *and* ALISOUN *gag the* KNIGHT, *while the others assist in binding him.*]

ALIS. Quick, Robin!
Take off his finger-ring. Mum, sweethearts! In, now!

[*Exeunt omnes, carrying the* KNIGHT *into the inn cellar.*

Enter the SQUIRE *and* JOHANNA. *Passing along behind the wall, they enter the garden by the wicket gate.*]

SQUIRE. Johanna! O my lady, welcome back
From Italy! Whom came you here withal?

Jo. With Spring I came. We heard the snows were thawed
In Merry England. Sir, why sent you not
Those songs you promised?

SQUIRE. I have writ to-day
New verses for you.

Jo. So! What are they? Rondeaux,
Amoretti, ballads, sonnets, odes?
[*The* SQUIRE *looks embarrassed.*] Well, well?

SQUIRE. Nay, I know not.

Jo. You know not!

SQUIRE. Not as yet.

Jo. You write me songs, yet know not what they are!
Farewell, sir! [*Exit.*]

SQUIRE. [*Hastily following her.*] Only wait! I will explain. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter, right, from the inn, the* PRIORESS *and* FRIAR, *the former reading a parchment.*]

PRI. In sooth, the verse is very beautiful:
[*Reads.*] "Eglantine,
O to be
There with thee,
Over sea,
In olive-silvered Italy!"
But, gentle Friar, why in Italy
When I'm in England?

FRIAR. Dame, 'tis poetry:
In poetry, all ladies have blue eyes
And live in Italy.

PRI. And is this truly
For me?

FRIAR. He bade me give it — with this spray.

PRI. [*Taking the sprig of eglantine.*] He is so chivalrous!
But I must finish.
"In olive-silvered Italy!

There to pray
At thy shrine,
There to lay
This green spray
Of our English eglantine
At thy feet!

Lady mine,
Then wouldst thou say:
'Pilgrim sweet

In Padua,
Take it; it is thine'?
Say not *nay*,
Fairest, dearest, far-away
Donna Eglantine!"

FRIAR. Alas, Madame, I did but do my duty.
He bade me bring them.
PRI. From my heart I thank you.
They are very beautiful.
FRIAR. But amorous!
I fear they are *love*-verses.
PRI. Love! To me?
Impossible! He is a gentleman.
FRIAR. How know you, lady?
PRI. By his noble mien.
FRIAR. Who is he? What's his name?
PRI. I have not asked.
FRIAR. His family? Who was his father?
PRI. Nay,
I know not, yet —
FRIAR. I warn you to beware. —
[*Pointing at the parchment.*]
His looks are dangerous. — He writes of *love!*
PRI. No, no! It cannot be.

[*Enter* CHAUCER.

The PRIORESS *addresses* CHAUCER *with naïve confidence, handing him the parchment.*]

Sir, is it so?
Are these love verses? [*The* FRIAR *goes out hastily.*]

CHAU. [*Examining the parchment.*]
Yes, Madame! I wrote them.
PRI. Ah ciel! O quelle outrage! [*She turns away.*]

[*Enter the* SQUIRE, *followed in a moment by* JOHANNA. *He hastens to* CHAUCER.]

CHAU. [*Wonderstruck, dropping the parchment, stares at the* PRIORESS.] Madame!
SQUIRE. [*Picking up the parchment.*] Is this
The song? [*Glancing at it.*] Ah, yes! "To Eglantine!"
JO. [*Entering, addresses the* SQUIRE.] Well, sir,
Where are my verses?
SQUIRE. [*Handing her the parchment.*] Here.
CHAU. [*To the* SQUIRE, *indicating the* PRIORESS.] *Why* gave you that
To her?
JO. [*Exclaiming.*] To her!
SQUIRE. Indeed, I gave it not.
JO. [*Glancing at the parchment, reads.*]
"To Eglantine!"
CHAU. [*Turning to the* PRIORESS.]
Dear Lady Eglantine!
PRI. [*Turning from him.*] No, no!
JO. [*Fiercely, pointing at the* PRIORESS.] Yes, yes, *to her!*
SQUIRE. [*Appalled, to* JOHANNA.] No, no, *to you!*
CHAU. [*To the* PRIORESS.] I wrote them not to you.
JO. [*To the* SQUIRE.] *He* wrote them! *He?*
You wrote them not to me?

PRI. [*To* CHAUCER.] You wrote them not
To *me?*
CHAUCER. [*Indicating* JOHANNA.]
For yonder lady.
PRI. [*Excited to tears.*] Love verses to her!
JO. O brute! What boor is this?
SQUIRE. You know him not.
'Tis a noble gentleman.
PRI. [*To* CHAUCER.] Ah me, who are you?
Who was your father, sir?
CHAU. A vintner, lady,
In London.

[*Enter* ALISOUN *from the cellar.*]

ALIS. Ha, ha, ha! God save my betters!
PRI. Alas, the Friar spoke true.
CHAU. The Friar!
SQUIRE. The Friar!
FRIAR. [*Sings from behind the wall.*]

Love is a liar,
But lovers love the pleasant Friar,
Who, making of their burdens less —

JOHANNA, SQUIRE, CHAUCER, PRIORESS, ALISOUN. [*In medley.*]
JO. [*To the* SQUIRE.] O false! A boor insults your love.
SQUIRE. [*To* JOHANNA.] Nay, love, 'tis *you* are Eglantine!
CHAU. [*To* PRIORESS.] Dear Saint, forgive my trespasses!
PRI. [*To* CHAUCER.] Ah, ciel! Whom may I trust on earth?

ALIS. Ha, ha! The fishes bite the bait!

FRIAR. [*Popping his head above the wall, with a mock gesture of benediction, sings.*]

Ben'cite!
(Thus singeth he.)
Bene — benedicite!

ACT THIRD

The hall of the One Nine-Pin inn.
Evening of the same day.
Outside, the chapel bell is ringing.

By the light of a single torch, the PILGRIMS *are seen putting on their cloaks and hoods, and taking links from a tap-boy, who distributes them. These links, as they are lit, throw an ever stronger light upon the grouped faces and contrasted garbs of the company.*

With their lighted torches, the PILGRIMS *pass out of doors, in the direction of the sound of the bell, singing in chorus.*

PILGRIMS.

Saint Thomas' voice is a holy bell;
It sounds where all sad people dwell;
And all who hear lay down their load
To ride on Canterbury road,
Where mavis, ouzel, thrush and wren
Mingle their songs in the throats of men
To raise this hymn to his hallowing:
Alleluyah!
Love is lord of Spring!

[*Among the very last, the* PRIORESS — *attended by* JOANNES *and the Nuns — is about to pass out, when* CHAUCER *approaches her with courteous supplication.*]

CHAU. Madame, goes she to chapel?

[*The* PRIORESS *pauses stiffly.*]

— Dear my lady,

The night is very beautiful.

PRI. [*Not looking at* CHAUCER.] Joannes!

CHAU. I come to bring you tidings of your brother.

JOAN. What would Madame?

CHAU. The moon —

PRI. [*To* JOANNES.] Go! Go to chapel!

[JOANNES *and the Nuns go out.*]

Alors, Monsieur, vous dites — mon frère — ?

CHAU. Your brother —

[*Aside as they go out.*] Oh, drown her brother!

[*Cautiously now the cellar door is opened, and the* MILLER *enters. He whistles softly; some one within whistles in answer.*]

MIL. Whist! Is he gagged below there?

SHIP. [*His head appearing.*] Aye, all's tight.

[*The* MILLER *beckons. Enter the* SHIPMAN, COOK, SUMMONER, PARDONER, *and* FRIAR, *the last being disguised as a chimney-sweep. Following them enters* ALISOUN, *disguised in the garb of the* KNIGHT, *with a scarlet-lined mantle.*]

MIL. [*Bowing low.*] This way, your lordship!

SHIP. Save your worship!

ALL THE SWAINS. Hail,

Dan Roderigo!

ALIS. [*While the* SWAINS *assist in adjusting her disguise.*] Good my squires, I thank you.

[*To the* MILLER.] Bob, sweetheart, lace my boot there, — how's my doublet?

God send my virgin sister like my beard
Better than me.

FRIAR. Let me amend it, love! [*He kisses her.*]

ALIS. Avaunt, vile chimney-sweep!

MIL. [*Kicking him.*] Ho, scarecat Friar!
Look! he has blacked his Friar's skin to save it,
For fear that Geoffrey and the young Squire catch him
And flay it off.

SHIP. [*To the others.*] Let's blab on him.

ALIS. No wrangling!
Kneel down! Kneel down, the batch o' ye, and swear—
Swear, as ye hope to win this lily-white hand—
Ye will be brothers till I win my bet.
Out with your oaths, now! Kiss my foot, and say:

By Venus' lip,
And Alis' hip,
I swear to keep
This fellowship!

THE SWAINS. [*Severally kissing her extended foot.*]

By Venus' lip,
And Alis' hip,
I swear to keep
This fellowship!

ALIS. Back to the cellar, now, and guard the Knight.
Tie fast and gag whoever enters there;
But when I clap my hands — so — and cry "Host!"
Come forth.
[*To the* MILLER.] Ye ken?

MIL. Aye, when thou cries me "Host!"

[*All but* ALISOUN *and the* FRIAR *retire to the cellar. The* FRIAR *peeps out through the outer door, then hurries to* ALISOUN, *with a warning gesture.*]

FRIAR. The Prioress!

ALIS. Quick! [*They hide in the cupboard.*]

[*Enter, from out of doors, the* PRIORESS *and* CHAUCER.]

PRI. Parlez toujours, Monsieur!
Parlez toujours!

CHAU. How silver falls the night!
The hills lie down like sheep; the young frog flutes;
The yellow-ammer, from his coppice, pipes
Drowsy rehearsals of his matin song;
The latest swallow dips behind the stack. —
What beauty dreams in silence! The white stars,
Like folded daisies in a summer field,
Sleep in their dew, and by yon primrose gap
In darkness' hedge, St. Ruth hath dropped her sickle.

PRI. Nay, yonder's the new moon.

CHAU. But here's St. Ruth,
Whose pity hath reprieved a vintner's son.
Your nephew's verses —

PRI. Pray, speak not of them;
But now — [*Turning to the casement.*]
Speak of the night; parlez, Monsieur!

CHAU. [*Looking forth at the sky.*] Yea, if perchance there were some *other* star —

PRI. Some other star —

CHAU. O, if beyond our world
There were some other star —
Some hallowed star, where our two souls might stand

Purged of this passionate clay,
And watch where love and youth
Hold mass at nature's May-pole; on that star
There would I take your hand,
And there I would not say
"I love you!" — not "I love you!" but "we love."

PRI. Monsieur, 'tis true.

CHAU. To speak the simple truth
To you is sweet, Madame.

PRI. Merci, Monsieur.

[*They look forth in silence. After a pause,* ALISOUN *and the* FRIAR *peer forth from the cupboard.*]

ALIS. Whist; are they gone?

FRIAR. Not yet.

ALIS. Bones! are they dumb?

FRIAR. Art jealous, dame?

ALIS. Shut up!

[ALISOUN *draws back in the cupboard. The* FRIAR *tiptoes off, right, unobserved.*]

CHAU. [*At the window.*] Some other star! Choose, lady: which is ours?

PRI. Yonder cool star, that hides its winking light
Like a maid that weeps — but not for loneliness.

CHAU. Oh, that I were a god, to steal it for you
And close it in this locket!

[*He seizes her wrist impetuously, gazing at the locket.*]

PRI. [*Simply.*] Nay, that holds
My brother's hair.

CHAU. [*Dropping her hand, looks away into the night.*]
We dream!

PRI. Of what, Monsieur?
CHAU. We dream that we are back in Eden garden,
Where the gates of God are shut — and sin outside.
PRI. Why, such, in truth, is love. — To hear you speak
Is sweeter than the psalter. Do not stop.
CHAU. Hark! footsteps from the chapel:
[*Going to the outer door.*]
Here comes your nephew with his lady love. —
Adieu, dear Lady Dreams! I go to find
The Knight your brother, and to bring him to you. —
Adieu!
PRI. Adieu, Monsieur! [*As* CHAUCER *goes out, right.*]
— Some other star! [*She goes out, left.*]

[*Enter the* SQUIRE *and* JOHANNA *from out of doors.*]

JO. So Geoffrey wrote those verses for you?
SQUIRE. Yes;
He called you Eglantine to make them sound
Euphonious. But the true Eglantine
She is my aunt. That Friar was to blame.
Ha, when I catch him, I will make him smart!
JO. He made us fools.
SQUIRE. Then you forgive, though we
Have quarreled?
JO. [*Smiling.*] Nay, I swear by the old song:

Roundabout, roundabout
Goes the road to a girl's heart:
All who ride in Cupid's cart
First they must fall out.

Therefore, lovers, for your moral
Remember this:
Never kiss, never kiss —
Before you quarrel!

FRIAR. [*Sings within.*]
What ho! What ho!
Dan Cupido!
A spurless knight usurps thy halls! —

Jo. What's that?

SQUIRE. His voice! It is the Friar.

FRIAR. [*Sings within.*]
Thy fortress falls
And all her rosèd charms. —

Jo. Is't in the cellar?

SQUIRE. Or the wall?
[*They look up the chimney.*]

FRIAR. [*Sings within.*]
To arms, Dan Cupido! To arms,
Dan Cupido!
[*With a rush of soot, the* FRIAR *falls into the fireplace exclaiming:*] Bon soir!

Jo. Od's fiends!

SQUIRE. [*Seizing the* FRIAR, *drags him forth.*]
At last I have thee, Friar. — How!
A chimney-sweep?

FRIAR. Did scare the ladykin?

SQUIRE. Was't thou who sung?

FRIAR. You mean the Friar, sir!
He's hiding.

SQUIRE. Where?

FRIAR. In the cellar.

SQUIRE. [*Giving the* FRIAR *a coin.*]
Show me. Come!
[*To* JOHANNA, *pointing off right.*] Mistress, await me yonder.
[*To the* FRIAR.] Show me the Friar;
I'll flay the scoundrel.
[*The* FRIAR *opens the cellar door. Snatching a candle, the* SQUIRE *precedes him.*]

FRIAR. Ho — a sneaking Friar!
Trust me; a swindling, skulking, lying Friar! —
O rare Bob-up-and-down!

JO. [*Calling after them.*] Alas! take care!
[*She goes off, right.*]
[ALISOUN *comes from the cupboard.* CHAUCER *and the* MAN OF LAW *enter, left.*]

CHAU. [*To the* MAN OF LAW.] Sir, have you seen the Knight Dan Roderigo,
Who travels with us toward Canterbury?

MAN OF LAW. What Knight?

CHAU. The young Squire's father. He intends
To meet his sister at this wayside inn.
She is the Lady Prioress.

MAN OF LAW. Nay, sir;
I know him not.
[*Pointing toward* ALISOUN.] Is yonder he?

CHAU. Ah, thank you.
[CHAUCER *starts forward, but stops on seeing he is mistaken.*]

Nay, 'tis another man.

MAN OF LAW. Good even, sir! [*Exit.*]

ALIS. [*Clapping her hands.*] Host! Host — O!

[*Enter from the cellar the* MILLER, *crudely disguised in the garb of an inn-keeper. He comes forward grinning and ducking to* ALISOUN.]

MIL. Here, sweet lording!

ALIS. [*Digging him stealthily in the ribs.*]

Tell me, host:

Hast thou residing in this hostelry

A gentle Prioress?

CHAU. [*Aside, starting.*] A Prioress!

MIL. [*Ducking.*] Aye, aye, sweet lording.

ALIS. Good! Go tell the lady

Her brother awaits her here.

CHAU. [*Aside, drawing nearer.*] Her brother!

MIL. Aye,

Sweet lording! [*He starts for the door, left.*]

ALIS. Wait; be sure to say — her brother,

Dan Roderigo!

MIL. Aye, sweet lording!

[*He goes out, left.* CHAUCER *approaches* ALISOUN, *who appears to ignore his presence.*]

CHAU. Sir,

Your pardon if I trespass. By your cross

You come —

ALIS. From the Holy Land.

CHAU. And you have friends —

Friends at this inn?

ALIS. A friend, sir; a fair friend;

By Jupiter, a sweet friend!

CHAU. Ah!

ALIS. A sister.

She is — a Prioress.

CHAU. Good God!

ALIS. How, sir!

CHAU. It cannot be.

ALIS. Signor!

CHAU. Her name? Her name?

ALIS. Perhaps you know her, what? 'Tis Eglantine.

CHAU. Impossible! — Your sister?

ALIS. [*Confidentially.*] Nay, in sooth,
You need not spare my blushes. We old lads
With beards, who sees our blushes, what? So, then,
This Prioress, she is not just my sister.

CHAU. No?

ALIS. No.

CHAU. What then?

ALIS. Vous savez bien, these ladies
When they would have a friend, they call him "brother";
So we must humor them, and call them "sister."
[*Winking at* CHAUCER.]
Therefore this little honeysuckle lady
Doth take delight to call me "brother."

CHAU. Liar!

[*As* CHAUCER *lifts his hand about to strike* ALISOUN, *she raises hers to guard; seizing it, he beholds on her finger the* KNIGHT'S *ring.*]

What! — "Amor Vincit Omnia!" — Even her!

ALIS. Take back your lie!
CHAU. That ring! What is that ring?
ALIS. St. Madrian! It is my love ring. She,
My Eglantine, gave it me. She wears a brooch
To match it on her wrist.
[*Re-enter, left, the* MILLER.]
MIL. The Prioress,
Sweet lording!
[*Enter the* PRIORESS.]
PRI. [*Coming forward.*] Brother! — Welcome, brother!
CHAU. [*Appalled.*] No!
God! God! I'll not believe it!
[*He hastens off, calling.*] Aubrey! — Squire!
[*Exit, right.*]
[*The* MILLER, *going to the cellar door, opens it and beckons. The* SWAINS *come out, and gradually draw near to* ALISOUN *and the* PRIORESS.]
ALIS. My pretty virgin sister!
PRI. [*Giving her hand, reticently.*]
Roderigo!
[*Looking after* CHAUCER.] Why did he leave so soon?
ALIS. Put up thy chin.
Art thou not glad to see me, sister?
PRI. Yea,
Mon frère. Forgive me; I had thought — you see,
My nephew — 'tis a pretty mannered youth. —
You're not alike, are you?
ALIS. [*Laughing.*] By Peter's toe,
I hope not. Saints deliver me from being
A new-hatched chicken's feather.

PRI. What! Your son?
ALIS. Next, thou'll be wishing I were like that fellow
That fetched me here — yon What's-his-name, yon — Geoffrey.
PRI. Why, 'tis a noble gentleman.
ALIS. Hoho!
Your noble gentleman! Why harkee, sweet:
He told me he's betrothèd to an ale-wife.
PRI. He told you — when?
ALIS. Just now, coming from chapel.
PRI. Her name?
ALIS. [*Stroking her beard, winks at the* SWAINS.]
What was her name, now? — Alisoun,
The Wife of Bath, they call her.
PRI. O grand Dieu!
That *person!*
ALIS. Person! God wot, 'twas not so
Your Geoffrey called her. "Alisoun!" quoth he,
"My lily Alisoun, my fresh wild-rose,
My cowslip in the slough of womankind!
Bright Alisoun shall be my bride!"
PRI. [*Throwing herself into* ALISOUN'S *arms.*]
Mon frère!
Oh, keep me safe, mon frère! [*She hides her face.*]
MIL. [*Laughing.*] By Corpus bones!
FRIAR. Look!
SHIP. Hold me up!
PRI. [*Starting back from the* SWAINS.]
These! What are these?
ALIS. Begone,
Varlets!

COOK. [*Bowing, as he retires a little with the other* SWAINS.]
Oh, aye, sweet lording!
SHIP. We know our betters!
ALIS. Come, come, what cheer, my little sister? How!
Hath that churl Geoffrey wronged thee?
PRI. No, no, no!
ALIS. Nay, if the churl hath wronged thee, by this brooch —
PRI. Swear not by that. *He* swore by that.
ALIS. O vile!
He swore by this — the brooch that holds my hair,
Thy brother's hair?
PRI. But Roderigo —
ALIS. What!
Give't here! Or may be thou hast promised it
To *him?*
PRI. No, no, mon frère. Here, take it — keep it.
ALIS. So! By this brooch —
[*Aside.*] Now, lads, learn how to woo!
Now, by this golden brooch of Eglantine,
And by this little slender wrist of pearl
Where once it hung; and by the limpid eyes
Of Eglantine, and by her ripe, red mouth —
PRI. Brother, such words —
ALIS. Call me not brother, sweet;
A brother's blood is lukewarm in his limbs,
But mine for thee is lightning. Look at me!
Was Jove a finer figure of a man
Than me? Had Agamemnon such an arm,
Or Hector such a leg?
PRI. Forbear! Forbear!

ALIS. Alack, she scorns me!
PRI. Help!
ALIS. Lo, love, I kneel!
PRI. Joannes! — Help me! Save me!
[*Re-enter* CHAUCER, *right.*]
ALIS. [*To* PRIORESS.] Lovely nymph,
Come to my arms —
CHAU. [*To* ALISOUN, *with sword drawn.*] Embrace me!
PRI. [*Going to his protection.*] Cher Monsieur!
ALIS. God save you, Master Geoffrey!
CHAU. Draw!
FRIAR. [*Aside.*] Lord! Lord!
The pot boils. Now to add the salt and pepper.
[*Exit, down cellar.*]
[*Enter now, from out of doors, in quick succession, all the* PILGRIMS, *returning with their links from chapel.*]
PRI. [*To* CHAUCER.] Monsieur —
CHAU. [*To* ALISOUN.] Draw!
PRI. Do not fight, Monsieur, I pray!
CHAU. [*To* ALISOUN, *who stands laughing at him.*] Wilt draw thy weapon?
[*To the* PRIORESS.] Is this man your brother?
PRI. Oh, sir, I know not; but he hath insulted —
CHAU. Insulted you? Enough. By all the devils,
Defend yourself!
ALIS. [*Drawing her sword.*] To arms, then!
[*They fight, amid uproar and commotion, till* ALISOUN *— being hard pressed — pauses, and holds up the locket of the* PRIORESS.]

Hold! A brooch —
A brooch!

[*Enter, right,* JOHANNA.]

CHAU. [*Staring at the locket.*] What does this mean?

[*Having snatched a warming-pan from one of the* SWAINS, *to defend herself in the scrimmage,* ALISOUN *now strips off her beard and wig — her own hair falling over her shoulders — and confronts* CHAUCER.]

ALIS. Ho, Geoffrey mine,
It means this pan shall warm our wedding sheets!

MIL. [*In angry dudgeon.*] What devil!

CHAU. Alisoun! My bet is lost! —

ALIS. Aye, now I've won, and thou art mine by law!

PRI. [*In frightened amazement.*] The Wife of Bath!

[*The* PILGRIMS *crowd around and laugh.*]

JO. [*Turning away.*] Impostors!

ALIS. [*To* CHAUCER.] Come, sweet vintner,
And kiss the brooch that hath betrothed our hearts.

PRI. Monsieur, is this true?

[*As* CHAUCER *turns to the* PRIORESS *in a kind of blank dismay, enter, from the cellar, swathed in a long gown, dangling with cut ropes, and pale from his gagging and interment — the real* KNIGHT, *accompanied by the* FRIAR.]

KNIGHT. [*To the* FRIAR.] Where?

[*The* FRIAR *points to the* PRIORESS; *the* KNIGHT *advances toward her.*] Eglantine!

PRI. [*Aghast at this unexpected apparition, flees to the priedieu, and kneels.*] No more!

CHAU. [*Struck, at a flash, by this medley of incongruities, bursts into laughter, and, seizing an ale-mug, lifts it high.*] Alis, I drink to thee and woman's wit!

FRIAR. God save the vintner and the Wife of Bath!

THE PILGRIMS. [*All but the* MILLER, *who withdraws sulkily, burst into laughing chorus.*]

God save the vintner and the Wife of Bath!
Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho!
Dame Alisoun has drawn her net;
She's bagged her game, and won her bet,
And plucked a husband by the primrose path.
Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho!

ACT FOURTH

Time: The next day.

Scene: Before the west front of Canterbury Cathedral, gorgeously decorated with tapestries, hatchments, and cloth of gold. Grouped near by are temporary booths of venders, gaily trimmed.

Many PILGRIMS *are assembled; others keep arriving from different directions, talking, praying, and sightseeing. At the Cathedral door a priest blesses with a sprengel those who enter.*

Outside, left, are heard girls' voices, singing.

Enter, dressed richly and gaily, CHAUCER, *surrounded by a bevy of Canterbury brooch-girls, who have wreathed him with flowers and long ribbons, by which they pull him. Thus they ply him with their wares, while he attempts to talk aside with the* MAN OF LAW, *who accompanies him.*

CANTERBURY GIRLS.

High and low,
Low and high,
  Be they merry,
    Be they glum,
    When they come
To Canterbury,
  Canterbury,
  Canterbury,

Some low,
Some high,
Canterbury brooches buy.

CHAU. Sweet ladies — nay, sweet Canterbury muses!
Not Hercules amid the Lydian nymphs
Was ravished by more dulcet harmonies.
[*To* MAN OF LAW.] You sergeants of the Law are subtle men.
Pray —
[*He offers money, which the* MAN OF LAW *takes.*]

MAN OF LAW. If you insist, my lord.

CHAU. Hush! Not "my lord." —
How stands the case?

MAN OF LAW. Why, thus: by English law,
No woman may be wedded but five times.
By law, sir, a sixth husband is proscribed.

CHAU. [*With a knowing smile.*] You'll vouch for that? — by law?

MAN OF LAW. Sir, I will quote
You precedents from William Conqueror.

CHAU. [*With mock despondency.*] Alas, my nuptials! And I would have made
So neat a bridegroom!

A GIRL. Come, sir. Will you buy?

ANOTHER. Take mine!

ALL THE GIRLS. Mine! Mine! Mine!

CHAU. Nay, fresh goddesses,
Your graces are more heavenly souvenirs!
Sell to me your glances
For a poet's fancies!

[*Enter* ALISOUN, *attired gorgeously as a bride.*]

ALL THE GIRLS. [*To* CHAUCER.] Oh-h!
CHAU. How much, Olympians, for your nectar'd lips?
ALL THE GIRLS. A kiss! A kiss!
ALIS. [*Intervening.*] Hold! Give the bride first licks!
ALL THE GIRLS. The bride!
ALIS. [*After kissing* CHAUCER.] Now, lasses, come and take your turns!
Lo, what a pot of honey I have won
To lure the village butterflies! Come, pretties:
Sip, sip, and die o' jealousy.
A GIRL. The shrew!
[*The girls go off, in piqued laughter.*]
[ALISOUN *is about to embrace* CHAUCER *again, when he turns to the* MAN OF LAW, *with mock severity.*]
CHAU. Cold-blooded knave! Look what you take from me:
The flower of women and the wit of wives —
Yet I must lose her!
MAN OF LAW. Blame not me, sir; blame The law.
CHAU. O heartless knave!
MAN OF LAW. By English law,
No woman may be wedded but five times.
ALIS. Hey, what? What devil is that? Say it again.
MAN OF LAW. By law, dame, a sixth husband is forbidden.
ALIS. How! You forbid me to take Geoffrey here For my sixth husband?
MAN OF LAW. Nay, the law forbids it.

ALIS. Pish! What's the fine?
MAN OF LAW. To hang, dame, by the neck
Till thou art dead.
ALIS. Aye, man, — by Geoffrey's neck!
Get out!
CHAU. [*Winking at* ALISOUN.] Soft! Soft! We'll bribe him.
[*Winking at the* MAN OF LAW.]
Sergeant — hist!
[*He whispers aside to the* MAN OF LAW *and gives him money, as if covertly; then he says aloud.*]
This statute: is there no appeal from it?
MAN OF LAW. A special dispensation from the king;
That's all, sir.
ALIS. Break his head!
CHAU. Nay, Alis, here's
Good news. The king himself is here to-day
In Canterbury. I will beg him grant
This special dispensation for our marriage.
ALIS. Thou — ask the king?
CHAU. Why not?
ALIS. Give me a vintner
For cheek! Sweet duck, I do believe thou lov'st me.

[*Enter the* MILLER, *with the other* SWAINS.]

CHAU. I am unworthy, love, to match thy wit.
MIL. Thou art unworthy, fool, to latch her shoe.
ALIS. [*Intercepting a blow at* CHAUCER.] Hold, Robin Miller! Art thou jealous?

MIL. Aye!
[*To the* SWAINS.] Axe her, who gagged the Knight?
SHIP. Who tied the Squire?
PARD. Who watched in the wet cellar?
SUM. Tied thy doublet?
FRIAR. Who stole thy scarlet cloak?
COOK. Who kissed thy toe?
MIL. Axe her, what made us do it? — Mayhap to make
Our wench a wedding with this vintner here?
SHIP. Revenge!
ALIS. Ho, stand away! My bridal bet
Is won, and Geoffrey is my man! He's mine,
By Corpus nails! and them as dare to raise
A fist at him first deal with Alisoun!
CHAU. [*With mock supplication, as* ALISOUN, *with her fists, keeps the* SWAINS *at bay.*]

Hymen! Hymen! hover near!
Shed upon a bridegroom here
Showers of thy protecting stars
Where his Venus turns to Mars!

HERALDS. [*Outside.*] Make way! Room for King Richard! Way! The King!
PRI. [*In the crowd.*] Shall we see Chaucer now?
SQUIRE. He's sure to come.
CHAU. [*Approaching the* PRIORESS *diffidently.*] Ah, chère Madame! Vous voulez me condamner?
PRI. [*With emotion.*] Monsieur! Monsieur! You have condemned yourself.
CHAU. Think gently of me yet a little while.

PRI. I think of you no longer, sir. I come
To seek another hero.
CHAU. Who?
PRI. A poet
Whom I have long desired to look upon;
They say, he will attend here with the King.
CHAU. Who is this poet hero whom you seek?
PRI. Dan Chaucer, laureate of chivalry. —
I am done with boors and vintners. [*She turns away.*]
CHAU. [*With a smile, protestingly.*] Lady!
PRI. [*With dignity.*] Silence!
SQUIRE. [*Interceding.*] Dear lady, hear him; you know not what you do!

[*Enter* HERALDS.]

HERALDS. Make way! Room for King Richard! Way! The King!

[*The* HERALDS *force back all the* PILGRIMS, *except those of high degree, showing, at the great door of the cathedral, a procession of priests and choir-boys about to emerge.*

A silence falls on the PILGRIMS *as, within the cathedral, choir-boys begin to chant a hymn. Issuing from the door, and forming against one side of the massed, kneeling* PILGRIMS, *enters a procession, headed by splendid-vested priests, bearing pictured banners of St. Thomas and his shrine, followed by choir-boys, and lastly by the* ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, *with regalia.*]

THE PROCESSION. [*Sings.*]

Tu, per Thomae sanguinem
Quem pro te impendit,
Fac nos, Christe, scandere
Quo Thomas ascendit.

[*Chants.*]

Gloria et honore coronasti eum, Domine,
Et constituisti eum supra opera manuum tuarum
Ut ejus meritis et precibus a Gehennæ incondiis liberemur.

[*At the climax of the chant, as the* ARCHBISHOP *appears in the doorway, the chimes of the cathedral peal forth from high above the kneeling crowd; cheers, beginning from the right, swell to a tumult. As the people rise, enter right* KING RICHARD SECOND, *in appearance a foppish lad, the* DUKE OF LANCASTER (*John Gaunt*), *and followers of the nobility and gentry, among whom is* JOHANNA.

The shouts of "God Save the King!" continue till the KING *and nobles take places in front of the cathedral.*]

PILGRIMS. God save King Richard!

RICH. Thanks, good gaffers! Thanks!

ARCH. AND NOBLES. [*Saluting gravely.*] God save your Majesty!

RICH. God save you, too!

[*To the* ARCHBISHOP.] Your Reverence is looking in fine feather.

[*To the* DUKE OF LANCASTER.] Ho, John of Gaunt, my pretty Uncle Jack,
I wish my ruffs were puckered like your brows.
Dost thou pick faults, eh? in my Paris gown? —
Par charity! Lend me a looking-glass!

[*Taking one from a courtier's sleeve, he peers into it, makes an amused face at himself, then holds it out toward the lords and ladies, turning it about and thrusting it for them to look into.*]

A little glass
To flatter your faces:
Look in, your graces!
And you, sweet ladies,
Before it pass
Behold here what shade is
Your latest passion;
For a little glass
May feature an ass
As a lion of fashion.
Look in, I pray you! —
Nay, alas!
You fear it might betray you? —
Poor little glass!

[*With a laugh, he tosses it into the crowd, where it falls and breaks at the feet of* CHAUCER, *who lifts it up, looks in it, and addresses the* KING *with a smile.*]

CHAU. To mirror *me*, your glass of fashion cracks,
Your Majesty!

RICH. [*Starting with surprise.*] God's eyes! Our laureate!
Halloa there, Chaucer!
JO. Chaucer!
ALIS. Chaucer!
PRI. Chaucer!
[CHAUCER *bows to the* KING.]
SQUIRE. [*To the* PRIORESS.] Lady, I said so.
RICH. [*To* CHAUCER.] Welcome back to court!
When April comes, there's not a man in England
But thinks on thee and love. While thou art England's,
And England Richard's, thou art Richard's own!
[*As the* KING *embraces* CHAUCER, ALISOUN *breaks away from a* HERALD, *who has been restraining her.*]
ALIS. Hold up, your Majesty! The man is mine.
RICH. What's this?
CHAU. My liege — a blunder.
[CHAUCER *whispers aside to the* MAN OF LAW.]
RICH. So! How's that?
ALIS. The man is mine!
MAN OF LAW. [*Aside, at a sign from* CHAUCER.] Your Majesty, Dan Chaucer
Bids me explain to you — [*He whispers aside.*]
CHAU. Your Majesty,
Lo, this is she, the fairy Alisoun,
Who late hath wooed me at enchanted inns
And so enamoured me, as you have said,
With love and April, that — to speak it short —
We are betrothed.

RICH. Betrothed! Par charity!

MIL. [*To a* HERALD, *who restrains him.*] Leave go!

RICH. [*To the* MAN OF LAW, *who whispers to him.*]
A miller?

MAN OF LAW. [*Aside.*] Him: that fellow there.

ALIS. [*Nudging* CHAUCER.] Speak on, sweet chuck!

CHAU. "Betrothed," your Majesty:
But there your law cries *Stay!* Thus saith your law:
"No woman may be wedded but five times." —
And so, because this wife hath scarce been knit
Five times in wedlock, therefore, — saith the law —
Our bosoms must be sundered.

MIL. [*In the crowd.*] God be praised!

CHAU. Yet of your mercy, King, I now presume
To ask you to outleap your laws, and grant
This woman — a sixth husband.

RICH. By my fay, sir,
You ask too much. My laws are sacred.
[*Aside, to the* MAN OF LAW, *who whispers him again.*]
Hein?

ALIS. Dig him again there, Geoffrey!

CHAU. King, have grace!

RICH. [*With a furtive smile.*] Chaucer, this Man of Law advises me
There may be one exception. — Hearken, woman!
I grant to thee the right to wed once more
On *one* condition. Hark it: Thy sixth husband
Must be a miller. — Herald, sound the verdict!
[*As the* HERALD *blares his trumpet,* ALISOUN *shakes her fist at* CHAUCER, *who eyes her slyly; then both burst into laughter.*]

HERALD. If any miller here desire this woman
Now let him claim her.
MIL. [*Rushing up.*] Here, by Corpus bones!
ALIS. [*Kissing him.*] Thou sweet pig's eye! I take thee.
[*Extending her hand to* CHAUCER.] Geoffrey, quits!
CHAU. Quits, Alisoun!
FRIAR. [*Bobbing up between them.*] Et moi?
ALIS. Et toi!
[*She kisses him.*]
MIL. [*Grabbing him.*] Hold, Friar!
That pays thee to perform the ceremony.
[*A medley of sweet bells is heard from within the cathedral.*]
RICH. My lords and Pilgrims,
The holy canopy is being raised!
[*The* PILGRIMS *crowd about* CHAUCER.]
CHAU. Give me your hands, my friends. You hear the bells
Which call us to the holy martyr's shrine.
Give me your hands, dear friends; and so, farewell!
You, gentle Aubrey — bold Bob — testy Jack —
Noble Sir Knight — sly Roger — slippery Huberd —
All, all of you! Call me your vintner still,
And I will brew you such a vintage as
Not all the saps that mount to Nature's sun
Can match in April magic. They who drink it —
Yea, though it be after a thousand years,
When this our shrine, which like the Pleiades
Now glitters, shall be bare and raséd stone,
And this fresh pageant mildewed history —

Yet they who drink the vintage I will brew
Shall wake, and see a vision in their wine
Of merry England and our pilgrimage;
These very faces with the blood in them,
Laughter and love and tang of life in them,
These moving limbs, this rout, this majesty;
And there, regathered by the Muse
In timeless Spring, we'll ride together
Once more, immortal on the April roads,
To Canterbury—to Canterbury! [*A deep bell sounds.*]

RICH. My people! St. Thomas will receive his pilgrims.

[*The* KING, *Lords, and People, forming in procession, begin to move toward the entrance of the cathedral.*]

CHAU. [*To* PRIORESS.] Madame, will you walk in with me?

PRI. Monsieur,
If you will offer this at Thomas' shrine.

CHAU. Your brooch!

PRI. *Our* brooch.
[*Shyly.*] Do you forget our star?

CHAU. Forget our star!
Not while the memory of beauty pains
And *Amor Vincit Omnia!*

[*The* HERALDS *blare their trumpets; the priests swing their censers; the choir-boys, slowly entering the cathedral, chant their hymn to St. Thomas, in which all the* PILGRIMS *join.*

Just as CHAUCER *and the* PRIORESS *are about to pass in happily together, the curtain falls.*]

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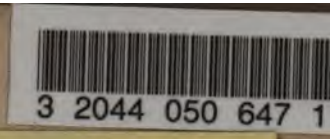
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